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RHYMES OF LITTLE BOYS

BY

BURGES JOHNSON

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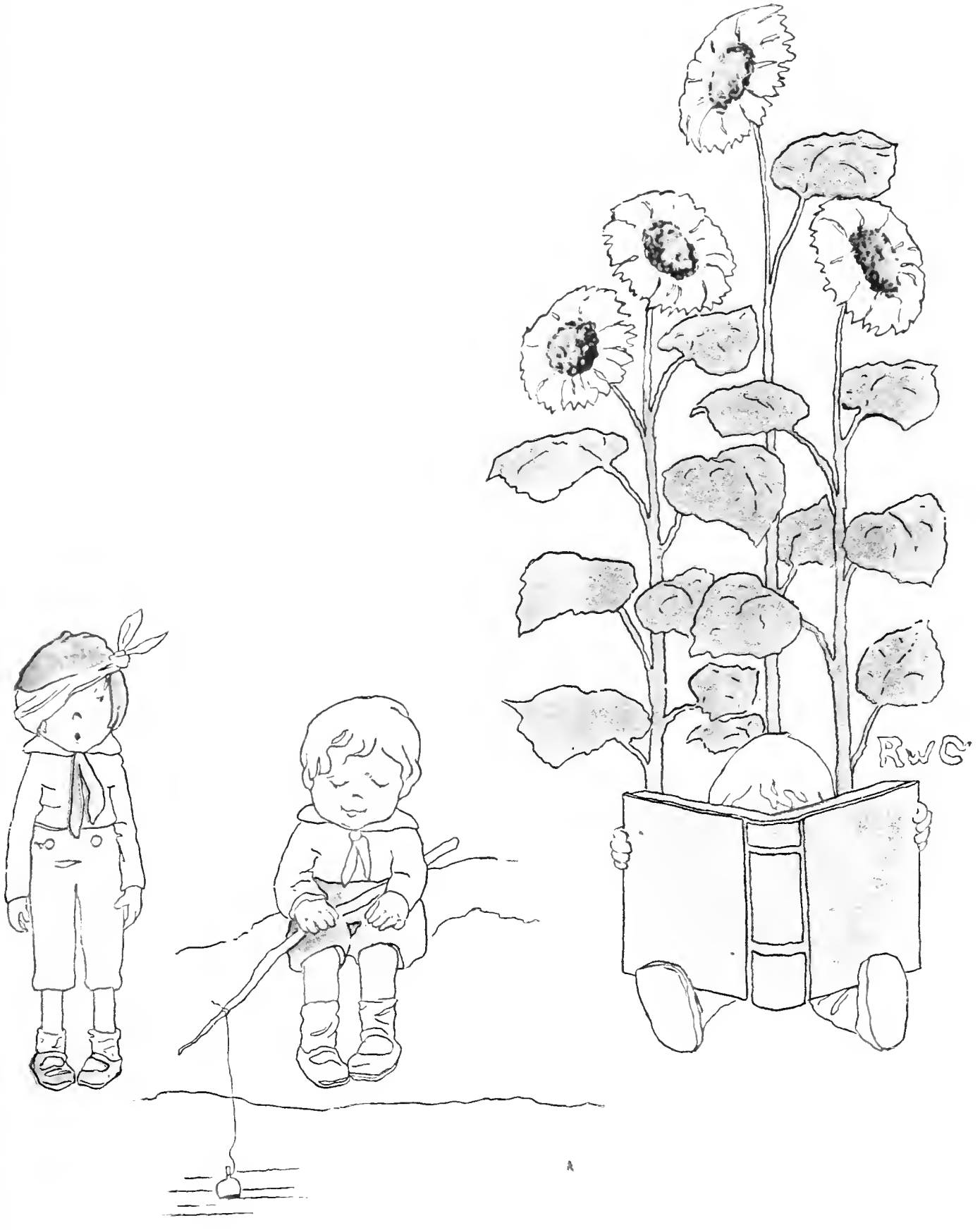
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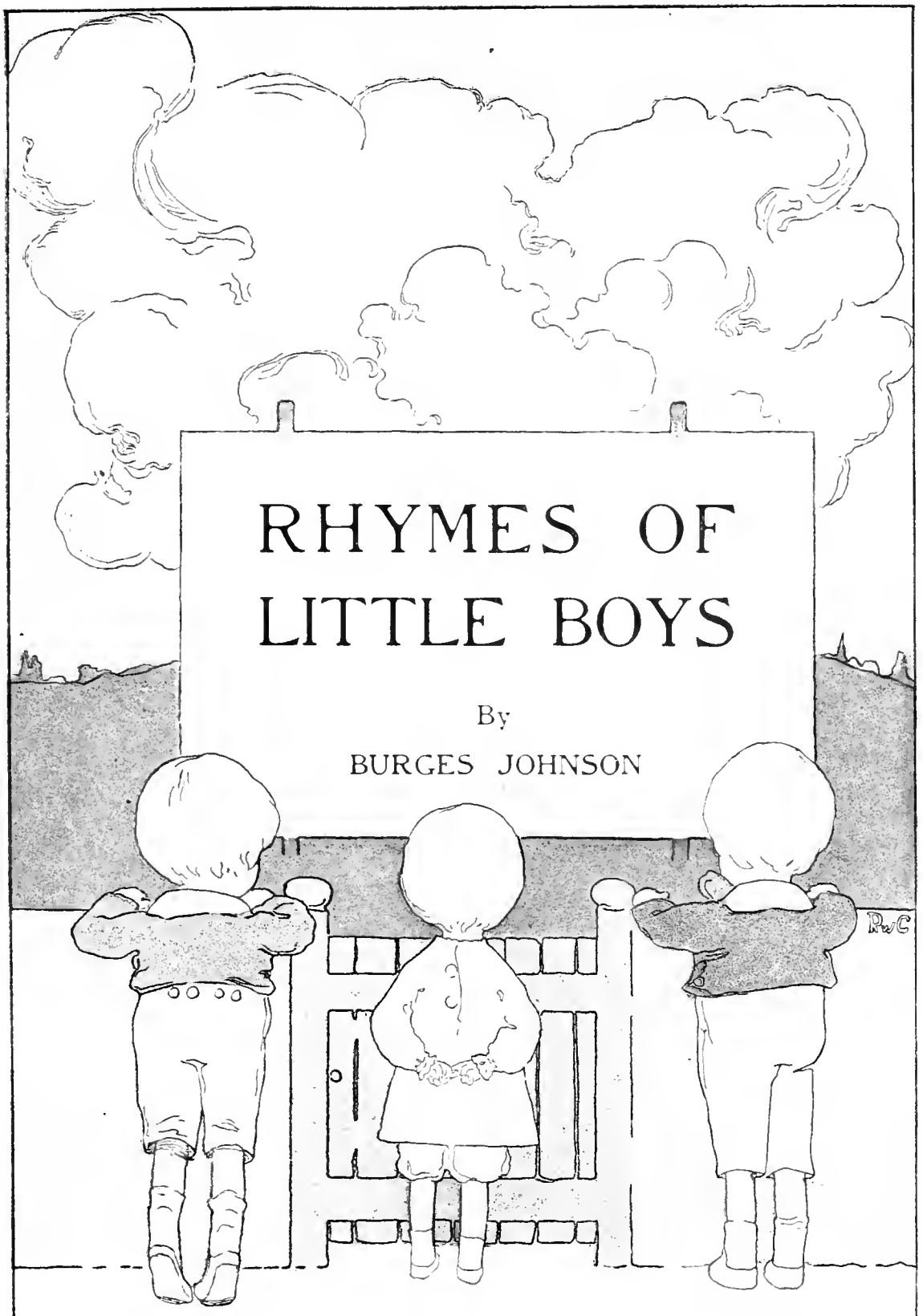

RHYMES OF LITTLE BOYS

By

BURGES JOHNSON

THOMAS Y. CROWELL & CO., PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK

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By THOMAS Y. CROWELL & CO.

Published in September.

TO MY FATHER AND MOTHER

For Whose Earthly Acceptance this Loving Tribute
Came too Late

This Book is Dedicated

Little Boy Realm is far afield,
And blind is the road, they say;
But the King and Queen, by the power they wield,
May lead, or may bring away.

Kindly firm is the royal rule,
Kind are the kingly eyes;
And day by day sees gentler sway
'Neath sunny boyland skies.

But wander-spirits calling us,
Or sunbeams ling'ring fond
On some vague peak, roused us to seek
A path to the beyond.

That loving, kingly hand reached out
To shoulders, level high;
Some spark there ran, as man to man,
And boyhood's realm flew by!

. . . . . .

Gently sweet is the gracious Queen,
  Love dwells within her eyes;
And day by day she toils away
  To weave some new surprise.

Her little kingdom brooks no change;
  Though some may roam afar,
Its hearth-fires burn against return,
  And every door's ajar.

A tired head against her knees,
  Dear chidings, grave or gay,
And 'neath her hand this grown-up
  Slips suddenly away. [land

Little Boy Realm lies toward the dawn,
  But the highway none may know;
And oh, if the King and Queen be gone,
  How then may I come and go?

AUTHOR'S NOTE

To be truly learned in the ways of small boys were no small distinction; such learning is a realm by itself to the anthropologist. The writer makes no pretence of it. The memories of one small boy are his only data, and he has no dispute with those who may have used a different text-book. As to the many alleged small-boy dialects, it is his comforting impression that no two small boys ever talked just alike; if, therefore, the destruction of King's English is not consistent throughout, let that impression account for it. Instinct has been followed, rather than rule.

The rhymes in this collection are of two varieties,—those in the words of little boys, and those to or about little boys; the latter are grouped together at the end of the book. Many of these rhymes were originally copyrighted in the magazines; sincere thanks are due to the several Harper periodicals, St. Nicholas, Everybody's Magazine, and Leslie's Weekly, among others, for permission to use them here.

B. J.

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WHAT'S THE USE?

What's the use o' growin' up?
  You can't paddle with yer toes
In a puddle—you can't *yell*
When yer feelin' extra well—
  Why every feller knows
A grown-up can't let *loose.*
I don't *want* to be no older—
    What's the use?

What's the use o' growin' up?
  When I'm big I don't suppose
Explorin' would be *right*
In a neighbor's field at night—
  I won't *like* to get my clo'se
All watermelon juice.
I don't want to be no older—
    What's the use?

What's the use o' growin' up?
  You couldn't ride the cow,
An' the rabbits an' the pig
Don't like you 'cause yer big,
  I'm *comfortublest* now—
P'r'aps I *am* a goose.

I don't want to be no older—
What's the use?

What's the use o' growin' up?
When yer growed, why every day
You just have to be *one thing.*
I'm a pirate, er a king,
Er a cowboy—I can play
That I'm *anything I choose.*
I don't want to be no older—
What's the use?

WHAT PUZZLES ME

There's something I'm *awfully* anx-
ious to know,
I think it's important as it can be—
S'pose it had happened beforehand so
That I was somebody else but me?
Then some other boy would be your
little boy,
An' love you more than a tongue-
can-tell;
I wonder would he be his muvver's-
joy,
An' smooth her headaches to make
them well?
—Cause I think it's funny as it can be,
That you is you, an' me is me.

I've worried and bothered for mos'
a day,
'Termining what I should ever do,
If things should be 'ranged in a dif-
ferent way,
An' you should be somebody else
but you.
You'd live in some nother place but
here—

Far away, maybe—but anyhow,
I'm perfectly positive, Mother dear,
I'd love you 'zactly as much as now.
—But I think it's funny as it can be,
That you is you, an' me is me.

If you was somebody else but you,
P'r'aps we'd meet in the street some day,
An' *I'd* be p'lite an' say "Howdado!"
An' "What a *nice* little boy!" you'd say.
Then we'd walk for almost a block, before
I'd tell you just who I was—an' then—
You wouldn't be somebody else anymore,
An' I'd be your little boy again.
—An' I think it's funny as it can be,
That you is you, an' me is me.

'MEMBER?

'Member, awful long ago—
Most a *million* weeks or so—
How we tried to run away
An' was gone for most a day?
Your Pa found us bofe, and ven
Asked if we'd be bad again,
An' we promised, by-um-by.
Do you *'member?* So d' I.

'Member when I tried to crawl
Frough vat hole beneaf your wall,
An' I stuck becuz my head
Was too big? Your Muvver said,
When she came to pull me frough,
S'prised *you* didn't try it too.
An' you did it, by-um-by.
'Member? *Do y'?* So do I.

'Member once, when you an' me
Found your Muvver's pantry key?
All ve folks stayed out till late,
An' we ate an' ate an' *ate!*
Ma was s'prised, so she confessed,
Vat we didn't eat ve rest.

An' we *did* it, by-um-by.
Course you 'member? So d' I.

'Member when your Muvver said
'At she wisht I'd run an' do
All ve mischief in my head
All at once an' get it frough?
S'pose we did, why maybe ven
We could do it all *again!*
Guess we could if we should try.
Will y' sometime? So'll I.

SPRING TONICS

I love it when th' folks begin
To give us kids our medicine;
I've tasted lots o' things that's worse.
I'm oldest, so they feed me first,
An' when it comes their turns then I
Just yell an' dance an' make 'em cry!

GOIN' BAREFOOT

It's more fun goin' barefoot than
anythin' I know.
There ain't another *single* thing that
helps yer feelin's so.
Some days I stay in Muvver's room
a-gettin' in her way,
An' when I've bothered her so much
she sez, "Oh run and play,"
I say, "Kin I go barefoot?" En she
sez, "If y' choose;"
Nen I alwuz wanter holler when I'm
pullin' off my shoes!

It's fun a-goin' barefoot when yer
playin' any game,
'Cause robbers would be noisy an'
Indians awful tame
Unless they had their shoes off when
they crep' up in th' night,
An' folks can't know they're comin' till
they get right close in sight!
An' I'm surely goin' barefoot every
day when I get old
An' haven't got a nurse to say I'll
catch my dethocold!

An' if yer goin' barefoot yer want t' go outdoors—
Y' can't stretch out an' dig yer heels in stupid hardwood floors
Like you kin dig 'em in th' dirt. An' where th' long grass grows
The blades feel kinder tickly an' cool between yer toes.
So when I'm pullin' off my shoes I'm mighty 'fraid I'll cough,
'Cause then I know Ma'd stop me 'fore I got my stockin's off!

If y' often go 'round barefoot there's lots o' things to know,
Of how t' curl yer feet on stones so they won't hurt y' so,
An' when th' grass is stickly and pricks y' at a touch,
Jes' plunk your feet down solid an' it don't hurt half so much.
I lose my hat mos' every day. I wish I did my shoes—
Er else I wisht I was so poor I hadn't none t' lose!

SUPERSTISHUS

Onct I went a-fishin' with a man what had a reel
An' fancy hooks an' catgut an' a fish-pole made o' steel;
He never got a single bite from early until late,
Just 'cuz he didn't take no stock in spittin' on th' bait.
Yes, he can laff an' jeer, *but where's his fish, I'd like ter know?*
Oh, I guess lots o' things is true 'at some folks say ain't so!

D'jever drop a horse-hair into th' wat'rin'-trough
An' leave it there fer weeks an' weeks 'thout drainin' of it off?
An' ef you use a human hair they say it only takes
Jes' half as long—but anyhow, *it turns 'em into snakes!*
An' ef a feller don't believe a half the things he hears
A darnin' needle comes along an' sews up both his ears!

Our cook, she's *superstíshus*—she's scared as anythin'
If someone spills a little salt er don't pick up a pin.
An' when I wuz a kid I'd walk down to th' gate an' back,
An' think that I wuz poisoned if my foot stepped on a crack!
I know *them* things is silly—I cross my heart I do—
But I guess lots o' things is so 'at some folks never knew!

BEIN' SICK

When I am *really* sick abed
  It isn't ever any fun.
I feel all achy in my head
  An' hate to take my medisun.
Th' sheets get stickyish and hot,
  But I am not allowed to kick
'Em off, er read, er talk a lot
    When I am sick.

I hate fer all th' folks about
  To come an' pat me on th' face
An' say, "Poor child, you'll soon be
    out,"
  An' tiptoe all around th' place.
They go when I pertend to be
  Asleep—I do it fer a trick:
I don't like folks to pity me
    When I am sick.

My mother's diff'runt—I don't care
  If she sits by me once er twice
An' says, "Poor boy," an' smooths
    my hair;
  She ain't just tryin' to be nice.

They bring warm squushy things to
me
Fer meals, an' make me eat 'em
quick.
I'm mis'ruble as I can be
When I am sick.

GETTIN' WELL

When yer really sick abed
All th' fun is getting well.
Say! It's jolly bein' fed—
I kin hardly ever tell
What tastes best. 'Most any food
Goes so fast I wanter lick
Th' plate. Stuff always tastes so good
When I've been sick.

I like it best when I can sit
All bundled in th' easy chair,
With all th' windows raised a bit
To give th' place a little air.
An' if a breeze comes now an' then,
I tell y' what, it's pretty slick
Just t' *smell* outdoors again
When I've been sick!

They put th' kittens on th' rug,
An' mother brings her sewin' in,
An' everythin's so nice an' snug
I sit an' look around an' grin.

An' then I get to countin' sheep,
Or wond'rin' why th' clock should tick
In diff'runt ways. I like t' sleep
When I've been sick.

WISDOM

Often when I wanter talk, grown-ups
say I ourghtn't,
For they think what I would say
cannot be important.
I am told that when I'm grown,
then I may be bolder,
Wisdom will be in my head when
I've gotten older.
Tell me, will it, when it comes, set
my head a-humming?
But I mostly want to know—will I
feel it coming?

COOKIN' THINGS

When my mother's cookin' things,
  You bet I never wait
To put away my ball er gun,
I drop 'em where they are an' run
  Fer fear I'll be too late.
The most excitin' kind of game,
  Er toy, er story-book,
I let 'em go, an' never mind,
The very minute that I find
  My mother's goin' to cook!

When my mother's cookin' things,
  Then you just oughter smell
The spices an' the sweets an' such,
My mouth gets waterin' so much
  I almost have to yell!
She opens up the oven door
  Sometimes, to take a look,
An' then I jab 'em while they're hot,
To see if they are done er not,
  When mother lets me cook.

When my mother's cookin' things,
  P'r'aps it's pies to bake,

Er doughnuts bobbin' up an' down
In boilin' grease till they are brown,
  Er p'r'aps it's johnny-cake.
Whatever kind of thing it is,
  I always like to hook
The biggest piece of dough I can
An' bake it in a patty-pan,
  When me an' mother cook.

When my mother's cookin' things,
  It pays you if you wait
An' eat 'em hot, right off the tin,
It's twice as good as anythin'
  Could be, et off a plate!
An' I guess *you'd* find out fer sure
  That I was not mistook
In any single thin' I've said,
If you could taste the gingerbread
  I've helped my mother cook.

RAIN-CHARM

Rain, rain, go away; come again another day,
Little Billie wants to play!

What's the reason, do you s'pose,
that it has to rain?
I've been flattenin' my nose up
against th' pane
For about an hour or so, beggin' for
th' rain to go.

In th' attic it's no fun 'thout th' other
boys.
I get countin', one by one, every single
noise,
An' the raindrops, when they strike,
sound so kinder solemn-like.

I jus' wait in this one place wishin'
it would pass,
Watchin' all th' raindrops race down
across th' glass;
See each big one, when it runs, gob-
ble all th' little ones.

Rain, rain, go away—wish you'd come
at night.
Guess you knew I'd plans t'day, an'
you came fer spite.
Seems zif jus' th' days it pours I
most want t' be outdoors!

BED-TIME

Last year my bed-time was at eight,
  And every single night
I used to wish the clock would wait,
  Or else stay out of sight.
It always seemed to me
The next half-hour'd be
The nicest time of all the day
    if mother would agree.
But she always shook her head
And she sort of jumped, and said,
  Why, it's late—after eight—
And it's time you were in bed!

That clock would always do its best
  To sit all quiet there,
Until I was my comfyest
  In some big easy chair.
Then its striking would begin,
And I'd tell my Motherkin
How I'd just begun a chapter, and
    it was *so int'restin'*—
And the end was just ahead—
But she *usurully* said,
  No; it's late—after eight—
And it's time to go to bed!

And now my bed-time is ha-past,—
  But yet that old clock does
The same mean tricks—it's just as
      fast,
  Or faster, than it was.
Last night it seemed to me
The *next* half-hour 'd be
The nicest time of all the day
      if mother would agree.
But she smiled and shook her head,
And she kissed me while she said,
  Why, it's late—ha-past eight—
And it's time you went to bed!

APPLE-PIE

When our cook she makes a pie
You oughter see her fingers fly!
  She sits an' holds a yeller bowl
  An' stirs so fast she keeps a hole
Down through the middle of the stuff;
There's milk an' egg, an' flour enough,
  And maybe other things, but I
  Ferget just all that makes a pie!

When our cook she makes a pie
She rolls the dough, that, by an' by,
  Is two round blankets; then you'll see
  Her slice some apples evenly.
Plump into bed she makes 'em hop,
An' cuts some peep-holes through the top
  So they won't smother when they lie
  All warm an' sugared in the pie.

When our cook she makes a pie
She balances the plate up high,

And with a pleasant, snippy sound
She trims it nicely all around.
And when she's thumbed the edges
tight,
The apples can't get up at night.
And when she's baked it, then,
oh my!
You never et such apple-pie!

BABIES

A baby is so queer, you know,
I think, each new one that I see,
It isn't possible he'll grow
To be as fine a boy as me.

IN THE STUDY

Nicest place in all the house
  Is my poppa's study chair;
Just as quiet as a mouse
  I go creeping there,
An' he gives a little smile,
Writing, writing, all the while.

There's at least a million books
  Up and down and round the wall.
I guess, from the way it looks,
  I can't read them all!
If I did I'm sure I'd be
Just as wise and big as he.

DUTY CALL

On Sundays I jus' love to dine
With Aunty Jane an' Emeline,
An' stay t' hear a temp'rence trac'.
I love it, 'cause when I get back
My muvver sez, "Poor little sweet!"
An' gives me heaps o' things to eat.

KETCHIN' RIDES

I'm awful fond of ketchin' rides.
I like those trucks where I kin stand
Without a-holdin' to the sides
(Er maybe holdin' with one hand!),
Though teacher says it's not refined
To go a-ketchin' on behind.

I almost *never* walk to school,
So many wagons pass our place;
My fav'rite one he makes a rule
Of always leadin' me a chase,
An' then pertendin' he's too blind
To see me ketchin' on behind.

I've found there's just two kinds of men
What drives th' wagons in our town,
'Cause when I meet 'em, now an' then,
There's some that grab their whips er frown,
But some they nod an' never mind
When I am ketchin' on behind.

Th' one that drives th' movin' van
Told me an' Brud he'd knock our
skulls
Together—*he's th' kind of man*
That's mean to cats an' animuls.
But any man is good an' kind
Who *likes* yer ketchin' on behind.

I guess when I am rich an' great
An' own a truck an' grocery cart,
I'll always drive 'em slow, er wait
So little chaps kin get a start,
An' have 'em built so boys kin find
A place fer ketchin' on behind.

'F I WAS ER HORSE!

'F I was er horse I'd hate t' wear
A collar what didn't fit,
An' blinder-things, an' I wouldn't care
To chew on a iron bit.
It ain't a way 'at I'd wanter live,
To just go everywhere I was driv.

'F I was er horse, I guess you'd see
I'd run away pretty quick!
I'd tear my harness an' wriggle free
An' go where th' grass was thick.
I'd kick my heels, an' I'd neigh fer joy,
But I ain't er horse, I'm er little boy!

AN IMAGINING

Two sisters that I never saw
  Are lying underneath the ground.
Sometimes my mother takes me there
  And says that I may play around.

But while she sits so quietly,
  I often have imaginings,
And see a-flying near her head
  Two little baby girls with wings.

IN THE MORNING

Reggalerly every day,
  When my papa's gotten up,
I can see him far away
  Mixin' sumpin' in a cup;
I can hear him slappy-slap
With a knife against a strap.

He is such a funny sight
  In the mirror on the shelf,
With his face all blobby white,
  Makin' faces at himself;
But I mustn't laugh, or he
Comes an' rubs it all on me!

Papa says when I'm growed up,
  With some troubles an' a wife,
I can have a mixer-cup
  An' a shiny crooked knife;
But he says I must begin
Puttin' prickers in my chin.

SYMPATHETIC

Whenever I start out to walk, our dog
he seems to know,
And runs along ahead of me to
show he's coming too;
And when there is a reason why he
really mustn't go
The hollering "Go Home" to him
is awful hard to do.

He wags his tail and jumps around,
and seems as if he said,
"I guess you didn't mean it, you
were only jokin' then!"
But when he sees I'm serious he
kinder droops his head,
Or looks up at me sorrowful, an'
looks away again.

And then at last he minds me if I
keep an angry tone,
It's awful hard to do it, but I try
with all my might;

And sometimes when I look around
I see him all alone
A-watchin' me and watchin' me
until I'm out of sight.

You see I know just how it is, 'cause
some days when I find
My brother's got to hurry off with
bigger boys to play,
And when he says I mustn't go and
tag along behind,
He leaves me sittin' somewheres
and a-feelin' just that way!

SPECIAL WORDS

My mother she has special words
  She's alwuz usin', but I find
The ones that I've most often heard
  Is By-um-by and Never-mind.

Whenever I can't have my way
  An' beg her "when?" and tease
    her "why?"
The things she's likeliest to say
  Is Never-mind and By-um-by.

An' when our picnic stopped becuz
  It rained, er sumpin' of the kind,
The only things she told us was
  Jus' By-um-by an' Never-mind.

I as't when By-um-by would be,
  She told me "Never-mind!" so I
Said "What is Never-mind?" an' she
  Said I'd discover, By-um-by.

My mother she has special words
  For question-answerin' an' such,
But I guess some that I have heard
  Don't really mean so awful much.

AT THE ZOO

I.

It must be hard for you, porcupine,
To dress when the day begins!
I'm glad there aren't any clothes of mine
A-needin' so many pins.

But when I've been saucy and horrid too,
Or up to some naughty prank,
If I could only wear clothes like you
I'd be awfully hard to spank!

II.

A snake's the funniest thing I know,
So dreadfully incomplete;
Without any arms where hands can grow,
And not any legs for feet.

But I wish I could crawl on the ground that way,
Or shin up the apple trees,
And not have nursie get mad and say
There's holes in my stockin' knees!

III.

I'm glad I wasn't a monkey too!
It's jolly to watch you climb,
But you're fighting and biting the whole day through,
And chattering all the time.

But maybe a tail like that would be
An awfully useful thing
Up in our neighbor's cherry tree
On holidays in the spring!

IV.

You thin giraffe, if I was you,
I'd have a hard time, I spec';
For nursie would make a great to-do
A-washing my face an' neck.

But when the jam and the cookie-jar
Are hid on the highest shelf,
I wisht I was as tall as you creatures are,
Instead of my tiny self.

A RECOLLECTION

When we was visitin' a farm
  I begged an' begged an' maybe
    squealed,
(I didn't see how it could harm)
  To just run barefoot in a field.
Until at last the lady said
They'd better let me go ahead.

It was so stubbully that each
  Poor foot got hurtin' right away;
Still I was bound that I would reach
  A haystack an' pertend to play.
But I just cried against the stack
For somebody to fetch me back.

My brother only stood an' laughed!
  I might uv caught my death-o-cold
Away out there in all that draught,
  'Cause I am only eight years old.
But sometimes seems *zif* older folks
'L laugh at things that isn't jokes.

MAKIN' THINGS

Whenever Christmas time comes round it really doesn't take
Much money, 'cause the folks prefer the presents that I *make.*
And so, for days and days before, I saw and pound and glue,
A-making things and planning who's the best to give 'em to.
But sometimes I get thinking that I'd really like it more
If folks would only use the things for what I make 'em for!

GETTIN' WASHED

At breakfast, when I'm kinder late
an' hurry to my place,
An' wanter eat, some person says,
"Oh, what a dirty face!"
Or, "Leave the table right away,
those hands are a disgrace!"
When I come back all nice an' clean
my mother says she fears
I didn't take a lot of pains to wash
behin' my ears.

An' lots o' times when I've been out
an' haven't touched a thin'
That could have dirtied me a *bit,*
why someone's called me in—
'Cause what they went an' said was
dirt was shadders on my skin.
But s'pose that cedar tree I climbed
did leave some teeny smears,
I don't see how a bit could get 'way
up behin' my ears!

Oh, when I'm big, without a nurse
or grown-up folks that tease,

Some weeks I'll wear my oldest
clo'es as dirty as I please,
An' muss my hair an' have big holes
in both my stockin' knees.
Of course I'll wash each *mornin'*,
'cept when playtime interferes,
But *you just bet* I'll let alone that
place behin' my ears!

ILLOGICAL

They're as proud as they can be
  Every time the baby squeaks;
When she gets as big as me
  Bet they'll scold her if she speaks!

'Cause some visitor, perhaps,
  When I try to say a word,
Laughs an' says that little chaps
  Should be seen instead of heard.

If that's truly what they mean,
  Seems to me it wasn't wise,
If they meant me to be seen,
  Not to make me bigger size.

An' if I can't talk so much,
  Why did God, who had his choice
Of materials an' such,
  Make me have so big a voice?

PIRATE'S CAVE

Under the table, when dinner's through,
There is my fav'rite cave.
My sister she is a pirate crew,
An' I am a captain brave.
With treasure out of the cookie jar,
And plunder from other lands,
To the pirate lair that's hidden there
We creep on our knees and hands.

Before the people get up to go,
Then is the time to hide.
I whisper, "Ho, my lads, lie low,
There are foes on every side!"
And then I thump on the table top,
And Papa says, "Hey! What's that?"
And another thump makes Mother jump
And guess that it's just the cat.

But Papa says, when I thump again,
"P'r'aps it's a pirate bold!"

And his legs an' feet come huntin' then,
A-tryin' to catch a-hold;
He keeps me hurryin' back an' forth
Till his hands comes huntin' too,
Then I sink the ship when I feel his grip,
And Mother she gets the crew!

DAYTIME NAPS

My mother thinks that little chaps
Who play a lot need daytime naps;
Though I've explained, with all my
might,
That I can't sleep except at night.

But sometimes, when I've played a
lot,
I'd jus' as liv go in as not;
It gives her quite a nice surprise
When I lie down and shut my eyes.

I couldn't get to sleep, I know;
But for a little while or so
I get to seeing on the wall
Queer pictures that aren't there at
all.

One time a camel stuck his head
Right close up to me on the bed,
And animals I'd seen that day
Up at the Zoo, they came to play.

And once I thought of curious things
That I could do if I had wings.

But all the nicest parts of it
I can't remember now a bit!

I think so hard of things I'd do,
I feel all stretchy when I'm through,
And then I look and find it's been
More 'n a nour since I came in.

It's nice to lie and think, perhaps,
But just the same I can't take naps!
(And mother says she sees it's true,
But thanks me just fer tryin' to.)

PRAYER FOR A LITTLE BOY.

Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to keep.
If I should die before I wake,
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to take.
And this I ask for Jesus' sake.

But while I live I want to be from
quick and angry passions free,
With gentle thoughts, and happy face,
and pleasant words in every place.
I pray, whatever wrong I do, I'll
never say what is not true;
Be willing at my task each day, and
always honest in my play.

Make me unselfish with my joys,
and generous to other boys;
And kind and helpful to the old, and
prompt to do what I am told.
Bless every one I love, and teach me
how to help and comfort each.
Give me the strength right-living
brings, and make me good in little
things.—Amen.

TOP-TIME

I wisht I knew what makes the top-time come
Before it's gotten over bein' cold;
Sometimes my fingers get so kinder numb
The string can't help from comin' all unrolled.
I like a top-string better when it 's old,
An' then I tell yer, I can make 'er hum!
I've learnt a special secret way t' hold,
By pressin', when I throw 'er, with my thumb.
You know that stubby yeller one I had?—
It split ten other tops, er maybe more—
I broke it, an' I tell yer, I felt bad!
But now she's mended better 'an before.

I don't see why our cook should get
so mad
Each time I spin 'er on the kitchen
floor.

KITE TIME

Last night me an' my brother made a kite—
The biggest one we've ever tried to do.
Stood up on end 'twas more 'n twice my height
(The kind that has three sticks instead of two).
I made the tail, an' 'fore I'd gotten through
I'd used up every rag there was in sight.
To fly her 'd take a whoppin' wind, we knew,
And then to-day it came exactly right.
A boughten kite may have a neater look,
But home-made ones are mighty hard to beat.
This big one nearly dived us off our feet—

'Twas in the length of tail we were
mistook;
An' you can see her, any time you
look,
A-hangin' in that elm tree down
the street.

BALL-TIME

This week it's got so warm that I have been
Without my overcoat for every day.
I wisht I hadn't promised to stay in
An' study for an hour, instead of play.
'Cause with the window up a little way
I smell the grass and see the buds begin.
Our clock's a lot behind time, I should say,
An' studyin' too hard'll make me thin!
I hear the boys outside begin to call—
They want me for a game of two-old-cat.
I guess they know I've got a brand new ball;—
It isn't me they want so much as that.
I bet you they can't borrow it at all
Unless I get first innin's at the bat!

SWIMMIN'-TIME

It was so hot in school I sat an' sweat,
An' thought all day how fine a swim would feel.
When time was up we didn't wait, you bet,
But just raced out here an' began to *peel!*
It's fun to hear the little fellers squeal
Each time you shove 'em in an' get 'em wet.
Once I was skeered when some big boy would steal
Close up behind—it kinder skeers me yet!
But anyhow I can stay under more
Than any boy my size—I do it lots.
It's funny—an' I've noticed it before—
Down deep the water 's warm an' cold in spots.

Hi! Hi, there! See those fellers up
on shore—
They're tyin' all our stockin's
into knots!

NUTTIN' TIME

I know where butternut an' shag-
bark trees
Grow thick,—an' chestnuts an'
sweet-acorns too.
Each fall we go there an' pick all
we please—
We take our lunch an' stay the
whole day through.
Last week we went to where the
walnuts grew,
With two big sacks an' filled 'em at
our ease.
I shinned one tree—that's what I
love to do!—
And then we hunted, on our hands
an' knees.
But after all, the part I like the best
Is when the sacks have gotten
pretty fat,
An' some one says it's time we
ought to rest
An' start the jam an' cookies an'
all that.

This time it kind of spoiled my
interest
To find a chestnut burr just
where I sat.

SNOWBALL TIME

When the snow first comes, so fine an' thin,
It's good for snow ice-cream; an' by-an'-by
Some evenin' we will fill a heapin' tin,
And drip hot syrup in—oh me, oh my!
Until this week the snow has been too dry,
But now it packs, and snow fights will begin.
We've built a block-house with a roof so high
We only stoop a little when we're in!
I've got some boots that come above my knees—
Last winter, too, they were my *special pride;*
I plunge through any snow-drifts that I please,
Or climb on top of 'em an' sit an' slide.

But Jimminy! my toes begins to freeze
If ever any snow gets down inside.

MY SORE THUMB

I jabbed a jack-knife in my thumb—
Th' blood just *spurted* when it come!
  The cook got faint, an' nurse she yelled
  An' showed me how it should be held,
An' Gran'ma went to get a rag,
An' couldn't find one in th' bag;
  An' all the rest was just struck *dumb*
  To see my thumb!

Since I went an' jabbed my thumb
I go around a-lookin' glum,
  And Aunt, she pats me on the head
  An' gives me extra ginger-bread;
But brother 's *mad,* an' says he 'll go
An' take an' axe, an' chop his toe:
  An' *then* he guesses I'll keep mum
  About my *thumb!*

At school they as't to see my thumb,
But I just showed it to my chum,

An' any else that wants to see
Must divvy up their cake with me!
It 's gettin' well so fast, I think
I'll fix it up with crimson ink,
An' that 'll keep up *int'rest* some
In my poor thumb!

REJECTED

There's a nawful pretty teacher at
our school, an' once I told her
That I thought we might be married
if she'd wait till I was older;
There was no one 'cept my mother
that I liked so well, I said.
She didn't even answer, but she
laughed at me instead.

She's forgotten all about it, an' it
seems to me a pity
That folks what are so cruel should
be made so awful pretty.
But I guess I'll make her sorry that
she treated me so hard,
If I do what I've been plannin', an'
I die in her front yard.

THE WIND

The wind it rushes in and out
  An' makes a great to-do,
An' little leaves leap all about
  To tell you where it blew.

Whenever it goes racing by
  It pulls my clothes and hair;
Some places it will sing or sigh,
  But no one sees it there!

The trees are p'raps the only thing
  That *see* it as it blows,
For they all lean, an' point, an' sing
  In whispers, "There it goes!"

THINGS THAT GET LOST

They tell me, when I lose a thing,
  No one's at fault but me;
It's just because I'm carelesser
  'N what I ought to be.
But there are happenin's that show
  It isn't true a bit—
'Cause when a thing gets lost, I know
  It's part the fault of *it.*

'Cause often when I'm in the house
  For just a little while,
I put my cap an' ball an' such
  All in a little pile.
Then when I'm in a rush to go,
  And hurry right to where
I left 'em, it's most always so
  That *one* of 'em's not there!

And while we hunt with all our might,
  The thing we're looking for
Is hid, I'm sure, just out of sight
  An' laughin' more an' more.

'Cause it can hear us goin' wrong
An' sayin', *"Where d' you s'pose*
That old thing is?" An' all along
It's happy, 'cause IT knows!

EXCUSES

Sometimes when I'm special naughty
In some bran'-new way,
An' my sister an' the nurse
Only get me actin' worse,
Daddy's told, an' when I'm caught, he
Asks what I've to say.

Daddy has some special uses
For a slipper he
Keeps upon his study shelf,
So I start to 'scuse myself,
An' I think up lots of 'scuses
Quickly as can be!

Daddy coughs, an' then confesses
That sometimes he does
P'raps misjudge me by mistake,
Then he gives my hand a shake.
(But I sometimes think he guesses
Just how bad I was!)

VACATION IN THE COUNTRY

If I lived in the country *every* day
  Instead of only when vacations come,
Would I get sunburned so that it would stay,
  And say words like "I recken" and "to hum"?

Could I wear one suspender if I chose,
  And learn an awful lot of useful things,
Like how to pick up pebbles with my toes,
  Or tell a bird from just the way it sings?

And would I know the places where to dive,
  And all the quickest cuts across the lots?
And could I keep some snakes and frogs alive,

And would my feet get hard, with
callus spots?

Back home there in the city, there's
no way
To learn such useful things; so
I've a mind,
Before the folks all start to go away,
To find some place to hide, and
stay behind.

SEWIN' BUTTONS ON

Every time my mother sews
Some kind of button on my clo'es,
It always gives me a surprise
To see how fast the needle flies.
In buttons all the difference is,
  They have four little holes or two;
But just whichever hole she says,
  She makes her needle-point come
    through!
She never seems to aim,
But it's always just the same—
It's as int'restin' to watch her as
    'most any sort of game.

But when I start to sewin' one,
Why, just as soon as I've begun,
The thread gets tangled as can be,
Or keeps a-gettin' caught on me.
An' after all the time it takes
  To get the needle goin' some,
It hits the button hard, an' breaks,
  Or comes one side an' pricks my
    thumb.

But anybody knows
That troubles such as those
My mother never seems to have, no
matter what she sews!

An' so I think, when I have grown,
And got a house that's all my own,
An' wife an' family an' such,
If I lose off my buttons much
I'll have my mother always there
To sew 'em on for me again;
Unless she thought she wouldn't care
To be so very busy then,
Or somethin' else occurred
That she thought that she preferred—
But she says it is the nicest plan
she ever, ever heard!

OUR GANG

(*With affectionate apologies*)

We've got a gang, and I belong,
  It's active all the year around;
We've got a drum-corps, twenty strong,
  A secret club and camping ground.
And then of course we have a yell
  That we can whistle low or hum,
And when I hear it, I can tell
  A fellow's calling me to come.
Wherever it might be,
I'd answer instantly,
  For I would know 'twas Dop or Al
  Or Jinks or Don or Rob or Hal
Or all of 'em but me.

To-day I heard my mother say
  How very greatly she enjoys
A-seeing with me in my play
  So nice a lot of little boys.
But when I told 'em so, they guessed
  That maybe she would not admire
Us all so much, if I confessed

That we had set some woods afire!
It's really true, and we
Were sure as we could be
That men were after Dop and Lest
And Jinks and Buster and the rest
And Don and Rob and me.

But later, in our rondevoo—
A very special secret one—
We talked about a deed or two
Of mischief we had lately done
And then and there we all agreed
We none of us were scared a bit!
We planned another direful deed,
We were so bold and desperit.
We named us the M.D.
And swore to secrecy;
The members we agreed upon
Was Al an' Dop an' Jinks an' Don
An' sev'ral more, an' me.

If you've no gang you call your own,
You're someone to be sorry for.
You can't do direful deeds alone,
And keep the oaths that you have
swore.

I know some secrets dark and dread
  About us fellows, every one—
But I won't tell, alive or dead,
  The awful deeds I know they done.
And though I get to be
A grown-up man, you'll see
  I'll never tell on Dop or Al
  Or Jinks or Don or Rob or Hal
Or all the rest, or me!

NURSES

There isn't anythin' that's worse
Than for a *boy* to have a nurse.
For even when she helps y' play,
She's alwuz gettin' in th' way;
There's so few things she under-
stands,
She's just a bother on your hands.

I learned this, cuz a boy I know
Has one that never lets him go.
First time we met, I thought that such
A feller wasn't good for much.
He licked me, though, an' sat on top
Until his nurse she made him stop.

And afterwards, why him an' me
We're jus' as friendly as can be,
An' I am sure that nurse-girl is
His parents' fault instead of his.
They ought to know she just
annoys,—
They're awful ignerunt of boys!

BUILDIN' FIRES

To build a fire is better fun
  Than almost anythin' I know.
There's certain ways it should be done,
  Or else it's likely not to go.
My father says that he admires
A boy that's good at buildin' fires.

An' in the diff'runt ones I've tried,
  There's lots of little thin's I've learnt,
Like lightin' from the windward side,
  An' how to bank 'er when she's burnt.
An' how to make the smudges thick,
An' when to poke 'er with a stick.

On Saturdays we love to go
  And do like tramps or Indians do,
An' cook an ear of corn or so,
  With frogs' legs, or some fishes too.
(The nicest food that's ever cooked
Is veg'tubles that you have hooked.)

A fire at home is not the same;
  You have to get a chair an' sit
And watch a kind of *gentle* flame
  With no excitement over it.
An' grown-up folks, instead of you,
Do all the pokin' there's to do.

WAS YOU EVER SPANKED?

Was *you* ever spanked? I ain't sorry a bit
I scratched at my brother an' hollered an' spit.
Then they pulled me away, an' I kicked an' I yanked.
Was *you* ever spanked?

Was *you* ever spanked? The times I've been good,
Why, nobody's cared, an' I ain't understood.
If I die, they have only themselves to be thanked!
Was *you* ever spanked?

DRESSIN' UP

It's fun up in the attic, when mother
lets us 'splore
In all the trunks an' boxes there an'
litter up the floor—
She tells us we may try things on if
we won't get 'em tore.

An' sometimes we play grown-up
folks in big ol'fashioned clo'es;
Or sometimes dress up fancy ways
an' play we're givin' shows,
An' charge ten pins admission, an'
all the fam'ly goes.

But when we find ol' things of mine
we rig 'em up on sis,
An' p'rade around, an' daddy says,
"Whose little chap is this?"
An' mother says, "Dear little boy!"
an' asks her for a kiss.

But when me an' my sister put her
skirts an' stuff on me,

I notice no one seems to think 'at
it's a girl they see;
But the women say "My Gracious!"
an' the men folks say "Oh Gee!"

A FABLE

Said a Little Boy to a Honey Bee,
"You'd not be happy if you was me!
'Cause *I* don't get enough time to play—
I can't do *half* what I want, all day.
You stay where it's sunny, all chock full of honey—
It must be funny to live that way.
You have a *lot* better time than me!"
Said the Little Boy to the Honey Bee.

Said the Honey Bee to the Little Boy,
"Yes, life is jolly and full of joy!
I hum and bumble and buzz away,
But it's mostly work and it's seldom play,
And, rainy or sunny, I toiled for the honey
Which you (how funny!) ate up to-day.

I don't know why, but I buzz with
joy!"
Said the Honey Bee to the Little
Boy.

A NEWSBOY'S PLAINT

Some fren's o' mine is tryin' hard
ter put me on de queer—
De doctor wat dey sent's a nervey
bloke;
Says 'e, "Yer need de country—I
ferbid yer stayin' 'ere!"
I tell yer straight, I t'ought it was
a joke.
Dere ain't no finer paper-route from
Bronx ter Chat'am Square—
'Tain't like I was a cully shinin'
shoes!
Who's he wid his 'forbiddin'? Now
gwan an' quit yer kiddin'—
Aw, cheese it! 'Ere's a cove dat
wants de news!
Pa--a--peh!
Woil' an' de Joinal! Times an' de
Sun!
Press or de Heral'! Hi—Wich one?
Mo--o--nin' pa--a--peh! Loidy, 'ere
y' uh,
A--a--ll a--bout de moider—buy a
papeh, Suh?

Dere's trees an' grass a-growin' in
mos' all de city parks,
De same as in de country, so dey
say;
Y' hear about de crowin' of de
roosters an' de larks—
I'd jus' as live get woke some
udder way!
Me fren' wot runs de book-store, he
lets me monkey round,
An' I see dem country t'ings in
picter-books—
An' I've frequent seen a chicken dat
de butcher-boy was pickin',
An' dere's often cows a-hangin'
up on hooks.
Pa--a--peh!
Woil' an' de Joinal! Times an' de
Sun!
Press or de Heral'! Hi—Wich one?
Mo--o--nin' pa--a--peh! Loidy, 'ere
y' uh,
A--a--ll a--bout de moider—Buy a
papeh, Suh?

I need de country air, 'e says? Aw
rats, dat ain't a mark
Ter wat I'd need up dere widout
de boys!
Dey say dere ain't no 'lectric lights—
at night de place is dark—
'Dere ain't no cops—An' *say!*
Dere ain't no *noise!*
Says 'e, "I wouldn't give *so* much
fer wat yer life is wort'!"
Fergit it! I ain't askin' 'im ter
give.
Who wants ter stay a-stewin' in a
place where nottin's doin'?—
I want ter do some livin' wile I
live.
Pa--a--peh!
Woil' an' de Joinal! Times an' de
Sun!
Press or de Heral'—Hi—Wich one?
Mo--o--nin' pa--a--peh! Loidy, 'ere
y' uh,
A--a--ll a--bout de moider—Buy a
papeh, Suh?

UNFULFILMENT

I see an upland pasture, clover-blown,
Where grave-eyed cattle graze the meadow-side;
And in the wavy blot of shade a lonely tree has thrown,
A little boy lies dreaming, open-eyed.
And something in the fair-gowned buckwheat fields,
And in the hill lined out against the sky,
And in the kindly spreading tree a subtle bondage wields;
I look—and lo! the little boy is I.

Afar, blue peaks that one time edged the world—
White clouds—a boyhood's realm of Maybe-so;
And from the deeps of memory a tapestry's unfurled
Of small boy visions, woven long ago.

And years and deeds went always hand in hand
In those fair pictures. Yet to-day there seems
A small voice crying sorrowf'ly from sky and cloverland
That I am not the figure of the dreams.

THEN AND NOW

I can remember, in the long ago,
How, when the evening shadows slowly grew,
I nestled closely, as I loved to do,
And begged a story in the twilight glow.
But when those mother accents, sweet and low,
Began some bed-time tale all strange and new,
I cried—Not that one! Let me listen to
The one you told last time—the one I know.

Was I so different in the days of yore?
I sit and dream anew the joys of old,
Crying to Fate to send them back once more,
Distrusting what the future may unfold.

Tho' sweet the hope be of what lies
before,
Sweet is the mem'ry of the tale
that's told!

SANTA CLAUS

Jingle of bell and clattering hoof
And shouts borne down the blast,
And muffled sounds from the snowy roof
While the winter wind sweeps past;
And sleepy eyes grow big and round,
And breaths are hushed at each mystic sound
While childish hearts beat fast.

The flick'ring flames, as they crack and glow,
Peep up the chimney wide,
And whisper then to the ghostly row
Of stockings side by side.
The eight-day clock, where it stands in state,
Holds fast its breath in the silent wait
For the king of Christmas-tide.

The days slip by of those happy times;

The paths we trod of yore
To the fairyland of the nurse's rhymes
Are barred by a closing door.
And we smile at the tales of a year ago
As childhood's truths into fables grow;
And lost is our goblin lore.

But yet to-day from the mantel-shelf
The stockings greet our eyes,
And our faith in the jolly Christmas Elf
On firm foundation lies.
For we see in merry lurking there
A father's love or a mother's care
Hid under the quaint disguise.

PLAYING IN THE LEAVES

Autumn leaves, Autumn leaves,
Garnered up in golden sheaves!
Sun that tinted them like gems,
Frost that keenly nipped their stems,
Wind that whirled them here and there,
Weary folk that raked with care—
All were slaves to serve our pleasure;
What though Time was bent and gray,
Yet we bade him add his treasure,
In the springtime of our play.

FIRST SWEETHEARTS

Tiny maids with sunlit hair;
Sombre elves with eyes cast down;
Princess dainty, debonnaire;
Auburn tresses, gold, and brown.
Some were gay and some were grave;
Shyly swayed by blame or praise;
Others ruled their willing slave
With their tiny tyrant ways.
Time has blent them all for me
In one golden memory.

HER VALENTINES

Little maid of former days,
I can see Love's postman bring
Youthful plaints in ancient phrase,
In my mind's fond picturing.
Tinsel cupids aiming darts;
Passioned poems half concealed;
What meant scores of paper hearts
When thine own was unrevealed?
Did some half-dreamt dream of thine
Whisper this year's valentine?

BABY JOHN

The lazy sun is yawning, as it hides
behind the town,
For the Sleepy-Time is at hand;
And cosy beds are calling, as the sun
goes creeping down,
To each little boy in the land.
The organ-man is drowsy as he
wanders down the street;
The leaves are asleep on the tree;
And the horses and the wagons and
the little dogs you meet
Are as sleepy as they can be.

Your bed is calling to you, little John,
Baby John!
There's a sleepy chair beside it to hang
your clothes upon.
And I hear the cool sheets saying, "What
means this long delaying?
It is time you stopped your playing,
Baby John!"

The chairs are all so tired that to
use them is a sin,
While the floor is asleep, no doubt,
And the carpets are the bedclothes
that snugly tuck it in—
You'll wake it if you run about!
I heard the cuckoo calling from the
big clock in the hall—
"Hurry up, little John!" it said;
And the little clock is ticking, half
asleep against the wall,
"Go to bed! Go to bed! Go to bed!"

Your bed is calling to you, little John,
Baby John!
There's a crinkley white pillow to rest
your head upon.
And the little dreams come creeping, I
can see them slyly peeping
To see if you are sleeping, Baby John.

BABY'S EYES

Wise is the baby with eyes of brown,
  Clenching each little hand;
Wrinkling its forehead into a frown,
  Trying to understand.
Sweetest and wisest in all the town,—
Thoughtful baby with eyes of brown.

Mischievous baby with eyes of blue,
  Laughing at other folk;
Planning and plotting the whole day through
  Some little baby joke.
Laughing and happy and clever, too,—
Mischievous baby with eyes of blue.

Calm is the baby with eyes of gray,
  Sweet little stay-at-home.
Near to the mother in work and play,
  Never will care to roam.
More of a comfort from day to day,—
Calm little baby with eyes of gray.

Wilful the baby with eyes of black,
Ruling us more and more.
Sunbeams follow the storm-cloud's track
Brighter than those before.
Heart is fonder when smiles come back,—
Wilful baby with eyes of black.

A LULLABY

Lie still, my little one, shadows are falling,
Closing thy wide-open, wondering eyes;
Hark how the voices of dreamland are calling
Sweet to my little one here where she lies.

Hushaby, baby mine, shadows grow deep;
Shut those blue eyes of thine, lie still and sleep.
Naught is affrighting thee, dreams are inviting thee,
Mother is near to thee—sleep, darling, sleep.

. . . . . .

What dost thou see in thy faraway gazing?
What dost thou say in that cooing of thine?

In thy strange tongue is it wisdom amazing,
Wise little visitor, baby of mine?

Raindrops are pattering, lull thee to rest;
Birds are all scattering each to its nest.
Darkness enfolding thee, mother is holding thee,
Angels are guarding thee—rest, darling, rest.

. . . . . .

Drowsy, my little one? Twilight is darkening,
Birds are all twittering sweetly good night;
Whisper thy dreams to me, mother is hearkening,
Listening over thee, clasping thee tight.

Lullaby, little one, sweet be thy sleep;

Hushaby, pretty one, slumbering deep.
Darkness may cover thee, angels watch over thee,
Mother is near to thee—sleep, darling, sleep.

IN MEMORIAM

(FRANK R. STOCKTON)

No story tonight, Dearheart,
  Though the evening lamps are here,
Though the sun is gone
And the shades are drawn
  And bed-time hour is near.

No story tonight, Dearheart,
  And bravely dry your tears;
What steals the joy
From a little boy
  Brings sorrow to older years.

No story tonight, Dearheart,
  And the old Bee-Man of Orn,
And the Queens and Kings
And the magic things
  You love, will help you mourn.

No story tonight, Dearheart,
  Nor chide the voice that fails,
For Death has willed
That the heart be stilled
  That wrought those well-loved tales.

And while we mourn, Dearheart,
It may be that he sees
Wee cherubim
All greeting him
And flocking round his knees.

SLEEPYKINS

Dearie, all your busy day
Has belonged to work and play,
Things to do and things to see,
Now the hours belong to me!
Day is done, and rest begins,
Are you comf'y, Sleepykins?

Tell me all you've been about
As you hurried in and out.
Or let silence, whispering,
Tell the one important thing.
Say your prayers and 'fess your sins,
Cuddle closer, Sleepykins.

While I pray that no alarms
Follow you within my arms,
Smiles may dance or tears may fall,
Only let me share them all.
(That sweet place beneath your chin's
Meant for kisses, Sleepykins!)

Sleepy, Sweetheart? Leave your cares,
Leave the Daytime's dull affairs.

Let the love-light swiftly chase
Tiny wrinkles from your face,—
Cobwebs such as worry spins—
Come! my Sweetheart, Sleepykins.

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